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ABSTRACT

Studies show that culture change initiated by the common individual is slow, but like the geologic forces shaping our earth, it is persistent and inevitable. Anthropology's response to Freud began the culture-and-personality school that stressed psychological rather than biological foundations of behavior. Recent studies perceive individuals as vessels by which culture is transmitted. Maintenance system models do not consider the process of cultural change. Diversity is necessary for the continued health of society, and behavioral variation can be compared to genetic mutation: variation must have adaptive value to be perpetuated. Most scholars see socio-cultural change through individual variation as much more gradual and less disruptive than do the dialectical theoreticians, who see socio-cultural change as a struggle between social life and individualism. Tradition can support change when there is a synthesis of the old with the new. Anthropological theory seems to be moving away from a perception of individuals marching lock step to the beat of culture. The mechanism by which cultures change or remain the same can only be their individual members. (Author/RM)

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THOUGHTS TOWARD A THEORY ON THE EFFECT OF THE COMMON INDIVIDUAL ON SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE; A BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY (ABSTRACT)

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(ABSTRACT)

Anthropology's response to Freud began the culture-and-personality school which stressed psychological rather than biological foundations of behavior, emphasizing the integrated whole. Recent studies perceive individuals as vessels by which culture is transmitted and label individualism as deviance. Maintenance system models do not consider the process of cultural change. Diversity is necessary for the continued health of society, and behavioral variation can be compared to genetic mutation: variation must have adaptive value to be perpetuated. Most scholars see socio-cultural change through individual variation as much more gradual and less disruptive than do the dialectcal theoreticians, who see as a struggle between social life and individualism. Tradition can support change when there is a synthesis of the old with the new. Recent studies deplore the tendency to generalize about behavior and attempt to analye diverse cognitive maps of individuals. Anthropological theory seems to be moving away from a perception of individuals marching lockstep to the beat of culture. The mechanism by which cultures change or remain the same can only be their individual members.

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Eighteenth-century Enlightenment speculation on the nature of early humankind, who were believed be represented by contemporary primitive peoples, and on the inception of social institutions, led to the theory of social evolution. The idea of geographical determinism developed into such ecologically oriented concepts of humanity's progression as those of Turgot and Condorcet, whose evolutionary scales began with hunting groups and progressed through pastoralists and agriculturalists to the present. This optimistic doctrine of progress through the ages provided the base for the hypothesis of psychic unity: all humankind was psychologically the same; differences in customs and beliefs had been caused by the environmental milieu.

The concept of psychic unity combined with an imperfect understanding of Darwin's theory of natural selection to result in the various evolutionary schemata which appeared in the latter half of the 19th century. By characterizing races or social groups as having learned more or less culture during their histories, classical evolutionists laid the groundwork for Freud's

hypothesis of psychocultural phenomena. Freud was well-read in anthropology's contemporary evolutionary schemes, and he incorporated portions into his own hypotheses.

Anthropology in America, by this time under the influence of Franz Boas and his school of historical particularism, was eschewing unilinear evolutionism. Under Boas, the emphasis had shifted from Culture to cultures, from a world-wide phenomena to something possessed by each group. In Malefijt's opinion, Freud extended the shaky principles of evolutionism beyond what they could bear:

> "Freud's concept of evolution. . .represented a mixture of biological determinism and strict unilinealism. . . . According to Freud, mankind had developed along the same lines as infants growing into adults" [Malefijt 1974:295-296].

Freud's conjectures that the human mind, and hence, human culture, progressed in an evolutionary fashion was viewed by anthropologists as a step backwards to 19th century unilateral evolutionism.

Anthropology's response to Freud marked the beginning of the culture-and-personality school. American anthropologists relished the opportunity of demonstrating that Freud's speculations on the universality of human psychological processes were not applicable to non-Western cultures, and that almost all behavior was cross-culturally variable. In the late 1920's and the 1930's, the work of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir, Cora DuBois, and others attempted to demonstrate the molding effect that each culture had upon the personality of its

members. The general expectation was that a typical or modal personality would be found among the members of a particular society because of their shared culture.

Edward Sapir's paper entitled "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society" (1927) was the first important contribution to anthropological theory of culture and personality. Its emphasis on the psychological rather than the biological foundations of behavior set the tone for the theories of the future. Sapir's work posited that individual personalities are shaped by a combination of cultural milieu and personal experience [Hsu 1972:258]. In the latter he parted company with the majority in the culture-and-personality school, who emphasized the pressures exerted by a culture upon its members. Treatment of personal experience and its effects, which came to be known as the school of phenomenalism, had few advocates for more than thirty years after Sapir's initial contributions.

For Sapir, language was symbolic of culture, as each society's world view and manner of thinking profoundly effects the way it structures its language. Together with a student, he proposed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which states that people's perceptions of reality are governed by their language.

> "Sapir was in some respects a configurationalist interested in the ways in which people's thoughts and behavior are patterned by language and culture. . . .At the same time Sapir always insisted on the significance of the individual personality and was dissatisfied with culturological accounts in which the individual was

conceived as a passive culture carrier" [Barnouw 1973:80-82].

However, most culture-and-personality anthropologists sublimated interest in individual actions to a search for cultural patterns or configurations. These studies neglected isolated cultural parts and emphasized the integrated whole. The idea that each culture had a distinct personality led configurationists to seek the dominant theme within each culture. This theme was believed to pattern the behavior of individuals as they acted out their cultural training.

This tendency to seek cultural patterns passively perpetuated by the members of a society has not been limited to anthropology. Sociologists and even a few psychologists have recently written on the individual as a vessel by which culture is transmitted. In a review of the history of modernization studies, Inkeles focuses on the theoretical processes of psychological change in individuals as they participate in more modern societies than the ones in which they were reared. He perceived the individual as shaped by the insitutions in which he lives and works--if they are modern, so is he [Inkeles 1976]. (Inkeles' study excluded women.) This approach rather recalls Spencer's organic model of a society having a life independent from that of its members. Inkeles does not deal with what makes a culture or its institutions modern. Without saying so directly, his discussion implies that modernity is imposed on a culture by outside forces, perhaps by government, by colonization, or by the economically elite. While he deals briefly with the possible impact of the individual on the social system, Inkeles feels that "the

majority of those studying individual change. . .see it as more caused by than causing institutional modernity" [Inkeles 1977:139]. He acknowledges that the cummulative effect of individual action is essential to the overall success of any program of national development.

Sociologists Birenbaum and Sagarin [1976] also consider the possibility that society may change to accept or to tolerate previously despised deviance from group norms. Most of their emphasis is placed on official and unofficial means of expressing hostility toward those perceived as deviant. Sakurai, a psychologist, identifies completely with the individual. In testing the factors contributing to the cohesiveness of small groups, he states that "conformity is presumed to be a conscious and motivated act" [1975:342], while deviance from group standards is the unconscious action of first choice.

The psychological perspective is usually 180° at variance with sociology's attack on the problem of individuality vs. social structure: Sociology's interests lie with the group, and many of their writings are reminiscent of anthropology's strictest personality-and-culture school. For instance, Robertson, a British sociologist, postulates that cultural change leads to deviance, specifically, that an increased emphasis on "self" over the last ten years has decreased individual inhibition, leading to an increased incidence of drug addiction, suicide, crime, and mental illness among the young. Robertson feels that ascribing responsibility for individual fulfillment to society rather than to the individual leads to a frustrating bind in which the indi-

vidual has no control over the situation in which he finds himself [Robertson 1976]. Robertson, however, does not even hint at the causes of the cultural change initiating the process.

Sociology gives only lip service to the idea of individual behavior causing social change; and many sociological works tend to label individualism, especially certain types, as deviance, a condition needing treatment, rehabilitation, or control by society. Interdisciplinary study of individual behavior immediately reveals problems of terminology and the sometimes unwitting value judgments some labels carry as baggage. The terms independence, deviance, creativity, individualism, non-standard, non-conformist, and innovator are all found in the literature; and all suggest something of the same unwillingness to be committed passively to group standards. The selection of one of these words over another, however, reveals immediately the writer's opinion of his subject--the curled lip, the pat on the back. Following the Peltos [1975], "intra-cultural diversity" may be used as a less value-laden term. "Alternative" or "variety" also suggest themselves as more neutral labels.

Some sociologists, such as Coser [1968], view grossly deviant behavior as a means by which non-deviants may reassert their membership or status in the group. By condemning alternative behavior, conformists maintain group standards. Coser's work shows the typical word games which sociologists play and which plague study of the individual across several disciplines. In his study of the functions of deviant behavior, Coser briefly addresses the adaptive value of deviance in new situations; but he seems to prefer to use the word "non-conformist" when discus-

sing **valuable** deviations from the norm. He even asserts that highly valued innovative behavior is a "special type of conformity" [1968:291].

Anthropology's concern with patterned behavior or conformity peaked with the configurationism of Ruth Benedict, who theorized that entire cultures have personalities which are also possessed by members of those cultures. Benedict saw individual behavior as largely conforming to the dictates of culture, a position that was reflected by Kardiner in 1961. He felt that at that time anthropology had no place for the individual in its frame of reference, while psychology had no room for society [Kardiner 1961:181, 193]. Bruner maintains that the individual is of interest to anthropologists only "for the light they shed on regularities in the social process"[1964:72].

Maintenance system models have been criticized because they do not consider cultural dynamics and the process of cultural change. Theories of cultural dynamics have shown two major areas of emphasis: individual variation or phenomenalism, and psychobiology or materialism. With the exception of Sapir and his early stress on the individual, most subsequent psychological anthropologists were guilty of uniformism, a position which examined only shared personality characteristics and "failed to take account of intra-society diversity and the role of culture in organizing that diversity" [Spindler 1975:137].

Only recently have anthropologists acknowledged that diversity is necessary for the continued health of society, although the agreement is far from universal. Edgerton states that "the

notion that deviance. . .is necessary for social health has not been widely accepted" [1976:6]. A recent popular text takes the opposite view. Since variations of the human mind continuously spawn new ideas about culture, Hunter [1976] sees these variations as serving the same function as biological mutations: while both have potential for causing change, most are never spread because the change is not functional. Some new variations of old behavior may even be maladaptive, but the theoretical stress must be on the **potential** for change [Hunter 1976:98]. Barkow has taken this biological perspective a step further and proposes a Darwinian model for both individual and group processes. He finds it unproductive to discuss the maintenance of social or cultural equilibrium, and views individual variation as "feeding back to the larger system, either generating it or continuously altering it" [Barkow 1973:378].

A similar approach is taken by Ruyle, who proposes an analogue to the synthetic theory of evolution, and states that "both the genetic and the cultural heritages. . .are determined by selective pressures. . .acting on the individual" [1973:202]. As a Marxist, Ruyle sees these pressures as primarily materialistic. Johnson [1972] and Levine [1973] agree with Ruyle that variation in a population may be compared to genetic variation, although their precise analogues vary. For Ruyle, fresh ideas equal mutant genes; Johnson feels that behavioral variation is equivalent to mutation, and that these mutant behavioral alleles "provide a fund of variation which may be advantageous under changing conditions" [Johnson 1972:156]. Levine's discussion centers on personality variations.

Ruyle, Johnson, and Levine have different approaches to the problem of the preservation of these variant ideas or personalities in the cultural pool. Levine finds that sanctions and punishments provide the selection criteria for personality variations, and that socializing agents, such as parents, are the method by which variations are preserved. For Levine, the personality genotype is individual behavioral dispositions which are unplanned by-products of variations in the structure of family, community, and occupation. The personality phenotype is observable regularities of adult behavior and is the personality genotype as modified by experience and socialization into the wider social system [Levine 1973].

Ruyle extends the biological analogy further than Levine does, pointing out that just as differential reproduction leads to some individuals contributing more to the biological gene pool, in the same manner some individuals may have a greater impact on the cultural pool than others. He stresses that variation must have adaptive value in order to be adopted and perpetuated, "since behavioral patterns which do not fit into a given environment are not likely to give satisfaction to the individual" [Ruyle 1973:211].

An early reference to the anology of genes and culture is found in a work not otherwise Darwinian, Herskovits' 1945 examination of culture change. He refers to the cummulative effect of small changes, which he calls cultural drift [1945:168]. Both he and Ruyle agree, however, that there is somewhat more direction in mutant ideas than in mutant genes.

Use of the biological analogy should not be taken to mean than non-standard behavior lies predetermined within us, but that the capacity for creative thought may enable an individual to meet the challenge of a new environment by applying culturally learned modes of adaptation in new ways. Acknowledging both the molding effect of society upon the individual and the creative effect of individual deviation from society's norms, Ruyle states that

> "the raw material out of which [the individual] constructs his free will is the cultural pool formed out of the countless free choices of other individuals, and [he] is effective as an agent in sociocultural change only to the extent that it influences. . .other individuals" [1973:211].

Ayal, an historian of messianic movements, outlines the possibility of social change caused by a single dynamic individual, even when the change is not adaptive [1966:233-234]. LaBarre, however, discounts charismatic leadership as a sole causitive, saying that one person cannot create the **need** for change, but can only offer new solutions to pre-existing problems. In reference to the leadership of messianic movements of the past, LaBarre remarks that what is called their "'Charisma' is only the uncanny appeal of the prophet's message. . .to the unconscious wish of of the true believer" [1971:20]. If the proposal of an innovator has no appeal to others, no social change will result. Indeed, if a new idea deviates too much from the socially acceptable range behavior, the innovator may be ignored, ostracized, incarcerated, or even killed.

Even among those scholars who see culture change as generated by individual deviation from group norms, most concentrate on leaders or entrepreneurs. [See especially Ruyle 1973, Barnett 1953, and Pospisil 1958.] Pospisil's study of a Papuan legal case discusses the modification of even very strict jural rules by individuals. In his case an incest law was changed over time because a very powerful individual had flouted it [Pospisil 1958]. Ruyle [1973] makes special reference to change caused, whether by accident or design, by individuals in powerful political positions. Barnett credits all cultural change to individuals, but he devotes much space analyzing the personality of innovators who actively work for acceptance of their new ideas or inventions.

Those describing cultures as uniform have usually concentrated on the maintenance of group standards, or jural norms. Gibbs, a sociologist, points out that social scientists rarely define "norms." He feels that this term is commonly used to mean three different things: (1) to indicate uniformities in behavior; (2) to designate a particular shared frame of reference or cognitive map; and (3) to express the existence of social obligation or pressure [Gibbs 1965:587]. All of these leave unanswered the question of how much deviance from the norm is permitted. Murdock believes that anthropology has erred in using norms or patterned behavior to explain individual behavior, pointing out that social systems which appear to be regular are comprised of many individuals behaving in ways which maximize their individual values. The phenomena of their collective deci-

sions leads to the "epiphenomena" of apparent social structure. Culture, says Murdock, can be explained by reference to aggregate behavior, but individual behavior cannot be explained by reference to culture [Murdock 1972:19].

Of course, complete individual variation precludes the possibility of there being a society; and several social scientists have considered the possibility of social change brought about by efforts to maintain a balance between jural norms and individual variation. Edgerton, a theoretical conservative, says that the position of anthropology in regard to deviance has been that the fault lies in the disequilibrium of society; and he sees deviance as a tension-management mechanism. Unlike the sociologists, Edgerton does not believe that anthropology has accepted "the notion that deviance is either natural to man or necessary for social health" through the bonding of non-deviants into a cohesive unit [Edgerton 1976:6,9]. Anthropology has paid little attention to the socially deviant, tending to obscure individual behavior in cultural generalizations, but Edgerton mentions no possible results of deviance other than ostracism of the deviant individual [1976:9,103].

Pelto and Pelto strongly defend the concept of intracultural diversity. To see a culture as uniform insults the individuals who comprise that culture.

> "Our view is that the qualitative. . .works that have employed stereotypic labels. . .are all dehumanizing to the extent that they deny individuality and initiative to the always variable array of persons in any society" [1975:8].

Additionally, uniformism may perpetuate or engender errors in understanding cultures, as today's descriptions of homogenity, however well intentioned, become tomorrow's stereotypes.

Excellent recent examples of the dangers inherent in homogeneous descriptions have been written by Monteil [1970], Romano-V. [1968], and Vaca [1970], who attack the lack of empirical data for both the old racist stereotype and the new, more benign, stereotype of Mexican-American family structure. They point out that the social sciences have posited a single structure for hundreds of thousands of families, frequently projecting the phenomena found in small populations over the entire Mexican-American history and people. Unfortunately, their passionate critiques of the cultural determinism which they feel still dominates the social sciences have appeared only in El Grito, a journal of Mexican-American studies which may not be read by the social scientists who could profit most from their comments.

Wallace [1965] and Meddin [1976] have viewed socio-cultural change as a dialectical struggle between social life and individualism, in which the individual challenges the social order and may create enough of a disruption to lead to a new social order [Meddin 1976:385]. Wallace, in a history of revitalization movements, states that when a social equilibrium experiences economic, political, and/or social disruption, members of that society experience a psychological condition broadly called "stress," which Wallace defines as "a condition in which the social organism is threatened." Socially sanctioned need-satisfying techniques no longer function as they once did

(or are believed to have done). Under these conditions, Wallace theorized, a single individual may be the conduit for change, which will lead, after a period of struggle with the establishments causing the original stress, to a new social order and a new equilibrium [1956:265-275]. It is interesting that Wallace sees individuals as the means by which social problems may be solved, but he leaves unanswered the question of the individual's role in causing social disruption.

Meddin, a sociologist, shows concern for the individual that is more typical of psychologists. He feels that there is a universal tendency for opposition between the individual and the social order. Culture, he believes, is comprised of many systems which move, generally speaking, from vigorous inception to "sterility and exhaustion." The life-spans of these systems (or institutions) vary, depending on how well they continue to meet individual needs. When social norms fail to answer the needs of individuals, the no-longer satisfying society must be either revitalized, replaced, or allowed to die. "The individualistic side of personality becomes increasingly deregulated" [Meddin 1976:387] as the individual rejects old means of fufilling his needs, but may not yet have formulated new methods. Complete individual creativity could lead to anarchy. This possibility causes individual stress, which leads to the creation of new, more satisfying jural norms, although Meddin does not specify by whom. These new jural rules in their turn may decay and cause individual stultification. "Routinization could advance to the point where the normative structure would be well integrated. . . yet be uninspiring and very difficult for most individuals to

relate to emotionally." This leads again either to the death of the system or to its change through individual creativity [Meddin 1976:387-392].

Most scholars see the process of socio-cultural change through individual variation as much more gradual and less disruptive than do the dialectical theoreticians. Firth [1954] sees individuals as constantly either modifying or recreating their social structure as they adapt the principles of that structure to their own particular circumstances. He points out that it is misleading to consider a society as only a set of ideal rules and its members as mechanically carrying out those ideals [Firth 1954:6]. The whole of a culture is greater than the sum of its ideals and norms. Firth would prefer that anthropology view culture as process, not structure, as dynamic, not static.

Murdock criticizes anthropology's "illusory conceptual abstractions [which are] inferred from observations of . . . individuals" [1972:19]. He feels that anthropology has focused on the changes that <u>cultures</u> undergo, not on the changes in the actual behavior of real people, in which individual decision-making leads to "gradual changes in traditional patterns of behavior and in the structure of social relationships" [Murdock 1972:19-23].

Barnett, who believes that innovation is the basis for cultural change, believes that the materials for innovations come from the existing cultural inventory, the size and complexity of which establishes the limits in which individuals function. This

carries an implication that members of technologicaly more advanced cultures are more innovative than members of "primitive" societies. Barnett was speaking here of material innovations, but his statement leads one to wonder if any individual is ever completely knowledgeable about all parts of his/her culture.

Although "all cultural changes are initiated by individuals," innovators are few, says Barnett, because "individuals differ in their . . . abilities to veer across the normal boundaries of acceptable deviation" [1953:20,39]. He feels that there is no real difference or need to distinguish between domestic and foreign innovations, even though it has been the custom that the popularization of a new idea in the culture of its origin has been called "adoption" or "acceptance," while across cultural boundaries the phenomenom is termed "borrowing," "diffusion," or "acculturation" [Barnett 1953:291]. Useful new ways of behaving or of doing things become part of a culture regardless of where they come from. Barnett defines innovation as "any thought, behavior, or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms," [1953:7] but the bulk of his work is concerned with material inventions and their advocacy by entrepreneurs. He fails to develop a theoretical framework for the application of this process to changes in behavior, value systems, or jural norms. It appears that Barnett sees an innovation as a nearly completed contribution to society, needing only salesmanship. He does not concern himself with the accumulation of small behavioral changes.

Examples of social and economic change wrought by the aggregate behavior of common individuals can be found in a study of

Bengali workers by McCarthy [1977] and in Eaton's work with the Hutterites [1952]. Eaton deals with internal pressures for social change experienced by the Hutterites during acculturation. His study showed that changes in jural norms--both written and unwritten--occur when deviation from those norms becomes widespread. Written rules are not repealed, but "when pressure for changes becomes strong enough to threaten harmony and unity, the rule ceases to be enforced" [1952:333]. In some cases, behavior that was once a violation may even **become** the law. Eaton concentrated on the cumulative effect of intra-cultural variation, stating that one individual deviation from the norm is not adequate to effect change in society [1952:334].

McCarthy found that while traditional cultures are often perceived as static, incapable of "generating their own momentum for change," under some circumstances tradition can even support and encourage change. New behavior was accepted as long as it remained within traditional frameworks. In her study [1977], Bengali village women were selected as mediators of change between their neighbors and a government program of agricultural modernization. Their role was to be taught, and in turn to teach, modern techniques in the sphere to which Bengali women are traditionally limited--home and family. McCarthy cites several modernization studies to make the point that the influence wielded by women in traditional cultures has frequently been underestimated. Anthropologists and the government agents of modernization are usually male; and they have most often preferred--either for reasons of social pressure or of personal

unconscious bias--to work with the male members of traditional societies. In McCarthy's study, women were used as mediators only because work with the men had not been successful.

McCarthy found that changes in behavior must be initiated gradually.

> "In order to influence other[s]. . . to change, the mediator must remain within the traditional pattern. . . to as not to be ostracized or considered deviant. . . . Mediation. . . is a . . . synthesis between old . . . values" and new ones [McCarthy 1977:365].

The factors leading to acceptance of a somewhat expanded role for women were success and synthesis. The economic condition of the mediators improved visibly, leading to a willingness of their neighbors to emulate. Mediators used their new funds to purchase acoutrements appropriate to their traditional roles.

> "Mediators used their new positions, not to attack . . . traditions, but to reinforce them. The means to do so, however, necessitated breaking <u>some</u> traditional patterns [education for women], learning new knowledge and techniques, and forging new social roles" as teachers and innovators [McCarthy 1977:369].

McCarthy stresses that this synthesis of the old with the new was crucial for the villagers to accept new economic behavior.

Herskovits, in a more theoretical study, reached a similar conclusion: "Acceptance or rejection [of new behavior patterns] depends upon the degree to which the innovation is aligned with pre-existing orientations" [1945:154]. If new behavior is so completely different that it is not recognized as an alternative

solution to an old problem or that it is not perceived as having adaptive advantages, it will not be perpetuated and will be lost to the cultural gene pool in the same way as is a lethal mutant gene. Although Herskovits believed that most behavior was automatic, following society's patterns, he criticizes anthropology's traditional reduction of the individual to a passive carrier of his/her culture. He points out that institutionalized patterns of behavior invariably have some allowance for deviation, some acceptable alternatives to the preferred pattern [Herskovits 1945:157].

Mar'i, a psychologist, finds that societies tolerate and channel creativity in fields that are culture-specific and that creativity is easier to tolerate in those areas which a culture values least [1976]. Herskovits concurs with this, for he points our that no culture values all of its aspects equally and that no individual member values his/her culture's many facets in the same way as another member. Herskovits feels that the aspect of society "holding greatest sway" will be the area of the most conscious decision-making. He differentiates the area "holding greatest sway," which he also called the "most emphasized" area, from those which are taken for granted. The latter, he believes, are the least subject to change and have the fewest acceptable alternatives [Herskovits 1945:164-165]. His examples are taken from technologically simple, traditional cultures; and it is difficult to find fault with his conclusion there. However, the opposite may prevail in more complex, stratified societies.

Mar'i feels that society's safety must be assured in order

for it to tolerate creative expression by its members. He defines society's safety as its ability to maintain continuity, security, and stability; and he does not speak to the possibility that welcome social change may result from individual creativity. However, Mar'i may be speaking from a self-limited perspective, for although he does not define creativity, he states that it can only occur when life's more basic needs are assured [1976:113-114]. This seems to preclude creativity as a problem-solving mechanism and seems to be the antithesis of individual creativity leading to culture change.

Examples of intra-cultural variation abound, and even very recent ethnographic studies deplore the tendency of their predecessors to generalize about behavior [Johnson 1972; Maslach 1974; Oliver 1965; Sankoff 1971]. But even these studies generally fail to theorize about individual activity and content themselves with describing their findings.

Johnson [1972] found that individuality and experimentation were essentially adaptive mechanisms among traditional agriculturalists and were just as important as the transmission of traditional culture. Individual agriculturalists were willing to experiment, to deviate from traditional farming practices if there was a low level of risk.

A similar form of behavior was found by psychologist Maslach in a laboratory test with groups of American college students. Maslach cites studies where group-perceived deviance of one person led to mistreatment of that individual, but where a minority of more than one was able to influence the majority. She criticizes such studies for their consistent view of deviance

as negative and hypothesized that willingness to deviate was dependent upon perceived outcome. Specifically, Maslach felt that individuals would be willing to draw attention to themselves, to distinguish themselves from the group, for positive rewards, but would seek anonymity and would not veer from group standards if a negative result was anticipated. Her hypothesiss was generally confirmed, although she found that women were slightly less willing than men to deviate, even for positive rewards. Men, on the other hand, were somewhat less disuaded from deviation by the prospect of negative rewards. Without empirical evidence, unfortunately, Maslach explains this difference as an example of differential socialization: male machismo and female timidity [1976:422].

A compromise form of deviance seems to occur in what Maslach calls "collective individuation," in which individuals try to distinguish themselves from the masses by aligning with a group that behaves differently and adhering to the standards of that group [1974:424]. Herskovits points out that such sodalities themselves must tolerate some deviation from their standards or risk losing members through an overly strict insistence on adherence to rules [1945:160]. Eaton's Hutterites are a good example of group toleration. In this case, the group so values its continued existence that it prefers to alter its character rather than risk extinction through continued loss of members [Eaton 1952].

Although the intent of her laboratory study with American college students was not to examine culture change, psychologist

Maslach observed in her experiments that change in group standards sometimes resulted through the positive experience of one individual. "Unless the chosen behavior is really deviant. . .it is quite possible that others will follow the. . .example and engage in the same behavior" [1974:424].

Sankoff [1971] discusses the problem of analyzing the diverse cognitive maps of individual informants while doing ethnographic field work. Her specific reference is to her study of kinship and land ownership among the Buang of New Guinea, both of which were differently reported by informants to a considerable degree. Her first method of analysis was a socio-linguistic model, which presumed that speakers share the same cognitive map and that interactional differences between speaker and listener can explain variation in verbal reporting. This model failed her; and she remarks that if

> "culture is to be understood as having a structure... the general practice of cognitive anthropology. . . must. . .provide. . .incorporation of data. . .from a wider sample of informants than is presently the case" [Sankoff 1971:391].

Finding great variability of informant assignment of one another to clan affiliation, she concluded not that this aspect of society was unstable, but that it was undergoing change. Sankoff feels that "variations are not mere deviations from some assumed basic organization; . . .they <u>are</u> the organization" [1971:404]. Anthropology has erred in assuming uniformity of cultural inculcation.

Oliver [1965] also criticized ethnographic studies for their

tendency to discuss cultures as if they were a seamless unit and as if all members had an equally strong committment to all rules. He feels that this tendency is especially strong in acculturation studies. Oliver suggests that cultures vary with respect to their "tightness of organization;" and he accuses ethnographers of selecting the more tightly organized because they lend themselves to neat, tidy descriptive generalizations. He describes the Bantu-speaking Kamba of Kenya as a very "elastic" culture, having loosely-structured institutions. Individual differences of opinion on the nature of most of these insitutions are very common and are considered natural and right. Oliver cites major differences in the social structures of two villages of Kamba, who nonetheless feel themselves to be one people. Although a few aspects are highly valued, the Kamba have weak ties to the totality of their culture, do not resist change, and have, in fact, been undergoing continuous cultural change since first observed. History shows that the Kamba culture has adapted and changed, but has not dissolved. "To those who fall into the habit of thinking of culture as a kind of strait-jacket, the Kamba are an instructive lesson. Oliver feels that "the very essence. . .of culture involves flexibility and the capacity to adapt readily to changing conditions" [1965:427].

Anthropological theory seems to be moving very gradually away from its early sociologically-oriented perception of the individual marching lockstep in time to the beat of culture. Anthropology's Spencerian super-organic model of an individual completely subordinate to society failed to heed the fact than an

organism can tolerate a fair amount of deviation from biological ideals or norms. Indeed, the more variety it can tolerate, the broader the niche it will be able to occupy. So too a culture with a ready supply of diverse adaptive models will be able to adjust to changing conditions. The mechanism by which cultures change or remain the same can only be their individual members.

Each individual must cope with a slightly different environment than his or her fellows; and each works to maximize his/her own benefits, whether economic or emotional. It must be acknowledged that early childhood socialization studies have shown that cultures vary in their style of socialization and that such socialization gives each individual a baseline of adaptive mechanisms. But even siblings do not have the same childhood environments; and as adults, individuals put together the pieces of their experience in different ways which will bring each the most satisfaction. Anthropology has assumed that an individual finds most fufillment in playing out his/her cultural role, but the studies of Johnson [1972], LaBarre [1971], McCarthy [1977], Maslach [1974], Meddin [1976], Pospisil [1958], and Sakurai [1975] have tended to show that individuals will engage in behavior at variance with social norms if they believe that the result of deviating will bring more satisfaction than will the result of conforming. Most studies have also shown that such gradual fine-tuning of culture to meet individual needs may be emulated by others, and so may bring about a change in what anthropologists have interpreted as patterned behavior. Culture change initiated by the common individual is slow; but like the geologic forces shaping our earth, it is persistent and

inevitable. Anthropology has erred in studying only the mountain and not the forces still at work to shape it.

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